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SUBJECT: USTR GSP DIRECTOR DISCUSSES TURKEY'S PARTICIPATION AT
EXPORT SEMINARS

REF: A) Ankara 1017

¶1. (SBU) Summary: As discussed at the April U.S.-Turkey Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) Council meeting (reftel), USTR Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) Program Executive Director Marideth Sandler visited Turkey during the week of July 9 to discuss Turkey's participation in the program with Turkish exporters in Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa, Gaziantep and Ankara. During the seminars, Sandler stressed the importance of communication with U.S. importers to ensure that paperwork is filled out properly so that Turkey's benefits under the program are fully utilized. In addition, she provided exporters with lists of eligible products and provided valuable information for exporters wishing to expand or take advantage of the duty free exports provided under the program. Sandler's week-long visit was praised by Turkish Foreign Trade (FTU) officials, who organized her program, and was considered by all as another positive step towards expanding our bilateral trade dialogue. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) During her July 9 - 13 visit to Turkey, USTR GSP Executive Director Marideth Sandler met with Turkish exporters in Istanbul, Gaziantep, Bursa, Izmir, and Ankara to discuss how Turkey can better utilize its benefits under the program. Sandler also met separately with representatives from the gold jewelry, silk textiles and traditional Turkish rug producing sectors. Turkish exporters' greatest concern is whether or not Turkey will be able to retain its benefits under the program after the Congressionally-mandated statutory review in 2008. Sandler gave no guarantees but provided information on how Turkish exporters can currently best utilize Turkey's benefits under the existing program. In addition, exporters of such products as Turkish travertine (marble) tile and home improvement material and traditional Turkish textile garments and apparel expressed their hope that their products would either be included again or for the first time, a desire that Sandler explained is very difficult to meet due to the requirement for Congressional action for any changes to the existing benefits.

¶3. (SBU) Sandler focused her seminars on the categories of goods for which GSP benefits are available to Turkey and the proper procedure for completing the required paperwork in order to fully utilize the program. She stressed the importance of communicating with U.S. importers to ensure they correctly complete their Customs declarations in order for the goods to enter the U.S. duty-free. She also answered questions posed by the exporters about the program.

¶4. (SBU) Comment: Sandler's seminars gleaned positive results by opening direct communication with Turkish businesspeople and debunking many of the myths surrounding the GSP program. She was well-received and provided a wealth of information that will no doubt help expand our bilateral trade relations. End comment.

15. Ms. Sandler cleared this cable.

MCELDOWNEY